

MINUTES ... REGULAR MEETING ... SEPTEMBER 14, 2026

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on September 14, at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows

PRESENT

Mr. John Marc Rittle, Chairperson
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz, Vice Chairperson
Mrs. Iris Linares
Mrs. Rachel Leon

ABSENT

Mrs. Lindsey Clifton

Also present were: John Ritter - Secretary-Treasurer; Diana Moreno, Assistant Secretary; Staff Members and members of the general public. William W. Matz, Jr., Esq., Solicitor.

Chairperson Rittle presented the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 10, 2026, were presented and approve. Mrs. Rachel Leon made a motion to accept the minutes of August 10, 2026. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Rittle/Ortiz/Leon; Nays - None

Chairperson Rittle presented the Treasurer's report for August 2026.

Mrs. Rachel Leon made a motion to approve the treasurer's report for August 2026. Mr. Rogelio Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Rittle/Ortiz/Leon; Nays - None

Chairperson Rittle presented the financial report and Section 8 Utilization report.

Mr. Snyder presented the Income and Expense Report and reported that the organization is approximately \$585,000 unfavorable to budget, primarily due to approximately \$596,000 related to the calculation of subsidy. He explained that as the organization approaches the end of the year, particularly during November and December, larger bills will be paid, and funds can then be transferred as needed to address the current budget variance. Cash remains consistent with prior periods, although funds are being spent on various expenses, including work and preparations related to INSPIRE expenses.

Regarding the Section 8 utilization report for the month of September, we leased 389 totaling \$387,000. Current leasing/utilization is approximately 76%. He also discussed the CMAP score, noting that the organization did not achieve the desired level because of the difficulty in maintaining the required utilization and spending levels given current funding constraints. The organization was unable to reach the targeted 95% cap expense utilization. Mr. Snyder further explained that the organization had not increased its payment standard/market rents to 100% during the past year because of concerns regarding HUD funding and potential shortfalls. As a result, the organization fell short of the target by few percentage points. However, that will not be a problem moving forward. We just got the 2027 Fair Market Rents the reported increase amounts were approximately, one-bedroom: \$178; two-bedroom: \$205; three-bedroom: \$219 and four bedrooms \$287.00.

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Mr. Snyder explained that the increase in market rents may vary depending on individual landlord costs and other factors. The additional funding will be important in addressing potential shortfalls and maintaining appropriate payment levels. He noted that this creates a balance between increasing payment standards and managing potential funding shortfalls.

For the record Commissioner Linares joined the meeting.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the financial and Section 8 report.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Rittle/Ortiz/Linares/Leon; Nays - None

Under Courtesy of the Floor, Agenda Items Only - Nothing reported.

Under Old Business, Choice Neighborhood project was updated under the Executive Director's report.

Under the Chairperson's Report, Mr. Rittle reported that an Executive Session will be scheduled to discuss confidential personnel matters. Board members have been contacted regarding their availability. He also noted that a letter from the Executive Director was included in the meeting materials and that an additional letter was received directly. Further discussion will take place during the Executive Session in accordance with applicable confidentiality requirements.

Under the Executive Director's report, Mr. Ritter reported An INSPIRE inspection was conducted on September 3 and 4 for the Marvine development. There are 389 units in the development, of which thirty units were inspected. The inspection score has not yet been received. Mr. Ritter anticipates a favorable score based on the walkthrough, which went well with very few deficiencies identified.

Bayard Homes is scheduled for a re-inspection. A date has not yet been established, but the inspection is expected to occur within the next three months. The development consists of twenty units awaiting inspection and is currently in the inspection queue.

Regarding the sinkhole-affected units at 1152-1166 Dover Lane, we plan to solicit bids to stabilize the foundations of the affected units. The units were impacted by a sinkhole that occurred adjacent to Pembroke Road. The proposed work will involve excavating as necessary and stabilizing and securing the slabs and foundations. Structural engineers will be involved in the process.

Mr. Speshok reported that the stabilization work for the sinkhole-affected units is currently being prepared for bid. Several bids have been obtained, and the costs received are well above the applicable bidding threshold. Therefore, the project will require further action and approval before proceeding.

Mr. Ritter reported that it is continuing to monitor the status of the Choice Neighborhoods grant funding. He spoke with Ted from the Gorman Company regarding the progress of the grant. Approximately \$25 million in funding is currently available; however, it is anticipated that the funding may not be awarded until next year. The timing remains uncertain and is dependent upon the availability and release of federal funding.

Mr. Rittle asked whether the regular renovations of the buildings are continuing. Mr. Ritter confirmed that they are. He also reported that another REAC inspection is scheduled and that staff are working to prepare the units for the upcoming inspection.

Due to the uncertainty surrounding the Choice Neighborhoods funding, alternative funding options are being explored, including a potential RAD conversion. He noted that RAD may provide additional funding opportunities and could be applicable to the Authority's high-rise properties. The Gorman Company has expressed interest in exploring this option.

Mr. Rittle had a question regarding the Project-Based Voucher resolution approved at the previous meeting. The discussion focused on the conditional provisions concerning Fair Market Rents and the use of 100% versus 110% of Fair Market Rent. A request was made for clarification regarding the distinction between the two levels and the current status of the matter.

Mr. Ritter explained that the Authority is currently funding vouchers at 100% of Fair Market Rent, while the proposed project is requesting funding at 110% of Fair Market Rent for an additional twenty-five units. It was said that if the project requires 110% of Fair Market Rent to remain financially feasible, the number of vouchers provided may need to be reduced from the proposed twenty-five units. An alternative option discussed was potentially partnering with another housing authority to combine available funding and meet the project's needs.

Attorney Matz noted that several funding and budget considerations remain to be resolved. He explained that the parties are discussing various options to develop a proposal that addresses the Authority's concerns regarding the proposed increase in voucher sharing funding from 100% to 110% of Fair Market Rent, as well as determining the source of funding. He noted that there were significant differences between the financial projections and the actual figures.

Mr. Snyder added that the original financial projections were based on 2026 figures, while the project is currently anticipated to go live in 2028. As a result, we must work with 2027, so updated figures will need to be considered, which may create an additional variance between the amount the Authority can afford and the amount being requested. Further review and discussion will be necessary to determine an appropriate funding structure.

Mr. Rittle asked whether there was a possibility that the project may not proceed or whether the matter was primarily a matter of negotiating the number of units. Mr. Snyder explained that the primary issue is negotiating the appropriate number of units and funding level, rather than determining whether the project can proceed. The possibility of collaborating with Northampton County was mentioned as one potential option, although no discussions have taken place at this time. HUD may also be able to provide guidance regarding this approach and the available funding.

Mr. Snyder stated that the goal is to move the project forward. We will consult with the advisor regarding the funding structure and applicable Fair Market Rent level before continuing discussions. It was also noted that additional financing and other funding sources may reduce the amount of subsidy required by the Authority. The exact amount cannot yet be determined because the final financing and funding sources have not been established.

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The final subsidy amount and cost per unit will be determined after the applicable funding sources are reviewed by HUD and/or the appropriate state agency. We will continue to research the funding structure and report back once more definitive figures are available.

Under Committee Reports, Mr. Ortiz reported that Fall Baseball started this weekend and runs through November. The Committee continues to provide food distribution services five times per month. Residents may receive donated groceries each Thursday through partnerships with local supermarkets, as well as an additional distribution on the second Monday of each month. Commissioner Ortiz noted that food resources have become more limited and that the Committee has adjusted its distribution schedule accordingly. The Committee also receives fresh produce and other food donations from local farms in New Jersey, which are distributed to residents and community members in need. Additional food donations are received through Freemansburg Elementary School and other community partners.

Additionally, preparations are underway for the upcoming Thanksgiving and holiday season. He noted that Lehigh Valley for All and the Chamber of Commerce provide gifts and other assistance to children and families in the community. The Committee also offers free driving lessons through a community volunteer who previously completed community service with the organization. Mr. Ortiz plans to provide information regarding the Committee's programs and services for distribution to residents, through the monthly rent statements.

Mr. Ortiz stated that the Committee remains committed to assisting residents, particularly families and individuals in need, by connecting them with available community resources and support services.

UNDER RESOLUTIONS - APPROVING OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO EMPLOYEE BENEFITS PERSONAL AND VACATION/SICK DAYS.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the proposed amendments to Employee Benefits Personal and Vacation/Sick Days. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Rittle/Ortiz/Leon/Linares; Nays - None

Under New Business, Nothing reported.

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Reports from Board Members, Solicitor and Staff, and Public Comments.

Mr. Ortiz inquired about the status of the current landscaping contract and whether the existing contractor would continue providing grass-cutting services next spring or whether the contract would be subject to a new bidding process.

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Mr. Ritter reported that Mason landscaping has a two-year contract and indicated that the contract is expected to conclude following the upcoming winter season and that the landscaping services are anticipated to go out for bid next spring, consistent with the Authority's practice of soliciting bids for the contract every two years. Mr. Ortiz thanked Mr. Ritter for the clarification and indicated that he may provide additional information regarding concerns with the current landscaping services.

Second, Mr. Ortiz requested that management consider providing additional recreational activities for children and youth at the community center. He suggested a small pool table and/or a portable, foldable ping-pong table that could be stored when not in use. Mr. Ortiz also requested a display case for trophies and plaques earned by youth participating in sports and other activities. He noted that the trophies and plaques have been stored in boxes for the past several years and expressed the importance of displaying the awards to encourage youth participation. Mr. Ritter agreed to look into the requests and evaluate the available space and safety considerations, particularly regarding the placement of trophies and plaques in the community center. Mr. Ortiz thanked the board.

Under Public Comments, Sharon Peoples, resident of Pembroke Development, expressed concern regarding her personal belongings that remain in a storage shed at the property affected by the sinkhole. She requested an update on when she will be permitted to retrieve her belongings and stated that she has not received sufficient communication. Mr. Speshok addressed concerns regarding the condition of the property's foundation and surrounding soil. He explained that the structural concerns are being evaluated. Mr. Ritter explained that the affected unit has been condemned and is not safe for anyone to enter at this time. He also stated that the unit is not scheduled for demolition and that the resident's belongings will remain in the storage. The resident was advised that the appropriate staff member would provide an update regarding her belongings when applicable. Mr. Rittle requested that an update on the sinkhole be added to the agenda under Old Business moving forward. for upcoming Board meetings.

Chairperson Rittle noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, November 9, at 4:00 P.M., in the community room at Monocacy Tower. There being no further business to transact, Chairperson Rittle declared the meeting adjourned.

John Ritter
Executive Director